

## **Asynchronous Online Language Courses**

**Mike Morone, March 8, 2014, Rochester NYSAFLT**

- Overview of AccelerateU
- Reassurance of intent not to replace language teachers - cite data on numbers
- Teacher's perspective: Viable option for small numbers of students, including those homebound; for minority languages also
- Benefits students by getting them for new learning environments
- Teachers act as mentors. No direct teaching; No writing of curriculum, or lesson plans
- Much easier for teachers
- Pay structure / pocket change
- Learning is more student-centered and self-directed by students
- Effective, flexible, personalized, similar to mastery learning. Removes the embarrassment factor for kids
- Some of the grading is done computer-assisted, with teachers reviewing, checking for errors, and checking other parts of exams
- Kids need independence, time management skills, and academic honesty
- Online is personalized and geared towards mastery learning
- Several vendors, including Middlebury (best foreign language program in the country)
- Profile of successful online teacher: encouraging mentor. Motivate, not punitive. Not that approach we use.
- Less punitive and more constructive; harass; coax, collaborate
- Most challenging aspect - pushing kids along in a kindly and helpful manner
- Reminders, and other communications take up half the time
- Demonstration of Middlebury language course - Middle School Spanish 1a:
  - Reading
  - Writing
  - Listening
  - Speaking

**Cheryl:** Traditional classrooms (face-to-face with teacher) find students competent in reading and writing before speaking and listening which come later.

Students are fearful of speaking in the traditional classroom, based on my conversations with them for various reasons: 1. Ridicule; 2. Not sure what to say; 3. Want to translate before speaking; 4. Scared of speaking in a LOTE in front of a class.

A good LOTE teacher works hard to create a classroom that is tolerant of the mistakes of others and respectful. Students who feel comfortable in class will speak in a LOTE freely with/without error and feel good about doing so! Teachers create comfort levels in their traditional classrooms with ease.

How does one create comfort in a non-traditional, online classroom: getting to know their students; asking them about themselves through the personal ID unit; giving information of the teacher in the LOTE; allowing for criticism that builds constructivism approach, builds on errors and clarifies/practices with the student to ensure that the same errors are not repeated. Students are more willing to tape their responses and submit them online (which a traditional teacher may often do) which makes for a more secure, comfortable environ than speaking in front of the class at first.

Listening tasks are available online for the traditional and non-traditional classroom via numerous collegiate websites, AP Central and You Tube. The traditional teachers I teach with in my school utilize both online tasks and tasks delivered by the teacher for students to use.

Reading tasks again are also available online for both traditional and non-traditional classrooms via numerous collegiate websites, AP Central, Teacher sites/blogs/realia. Powerful readings are those that appear on current websites (ESPN in Español, newspapers, restaurant sites in Spanish/LA countries, social media, etc.).

Writing tasks are formulated by teachers who write curriculum and are based on units of study. Students enjoy interacting with their writings by blogging, use of a wiki, tweeting, facebooking in the target language.

What I found in my years of online teaching are the following:

1. Meeting students face-to-face helps students understand the teacher on the "other side" is human also! Student interactions occur at off-times, usually after school has ended, on weekends, at night. Teachers should be aware of this to monitor and adjust scoring and teaching tips delegated to this timeframe.
2. School counselors do not answer/acknowledge emails sent by online teachers.
3. Canned curricula (BOCES/District/AP approved) are great tools! Thank you for allowing us

the freedom to enrich this curricula.

4. Teacher feedback is very important! TIMELY feedback is the key.
5. Teacher introductions and student introductions/interactions are useful! We are in this together!
6. Families do not always respond to teacher requests.
7. BOCES administrators are the best in keeping the programs together, keeping teachers informed, and allow for student-administrator interaction that is not threatening!

Based on the above, what I found in my years of traditional teaching:

1. Meeting students face to face two of three days each week is beneficial as well as allowing student use of technology manipulation of the language.
2. Counselors answer and acknowledge emails sent.
3. Curricula (BOCES/District/AP approved) are great tools! Thank you for allowing us the freedom to deviate and enrich this curricula.
4. Teacher feedback is important! TIMELY feedback is the key.
5. Teacher and student introductions/interactions happen daily...we are in this together!
6. Families do not always respond to teacher requests.
7. BOCES/District administrators are the best in keeping programs together, keeping teachers informed, and usually do not allow for positive student-adm interaction....if an administrator is looking for you in the traditional classroom it is usually for a student infraction.

Moving to technology use for credit recovery and classroom enrichment is the norm in my traditional teaching setting. It is also not uncommon for me to post a listening task on my website for students to listen to and respond via classroom blog. Students enjoy this...they live technology daily! A few of my best lessons including texting in Spanish, tweeting in Spanish and blogging in Spanish. Get a classroom wiki for students to correct! It is a fun way to "find the errors."

LOTE is used/taught daily on the Internet and we need to move in that direction to afford opportunities to our students who would not otherwise have them. With the push for Honors/AP coursework, it makes sense to give students in Districts not as populated the chance to learn LOTE online. I look forward to working with BOCES and other Districts to further this push. A student can earn a college degree online, why not high school credits also?

**Julie** - I am very new to this experience so I'm not sure how much I have to offer... However I will

say that one of the benefits to an online language course that I hadn't anticipated was the ability to really listen to each individual student speak frequently and to be able to provide feedback individually on a personal level. In the traditional classroom I feel that is one of the challenges that is very difficult to accomplish- getting every student speaking everyday, and doing so in a way that the teacher can provide meaningful feedback.